

Donna Wheeler

8 Linda Ct

Kirkwood Pa 17536

607-426-2533

Dear Honorable Judge Brann,

My name is Donna Wheeler, and I am writing to you on behalf of my son Benjamin Wheeler.

I am aware of the charges against him and wanted to write to you to try to shed some insight into who Benjamin was before this whole thing came to light, who he is outside of these charges, as well as what we have seen in him since this all began.

Growing up in a small town, everyone knew Ben. We would jokingly call him 'the mayor' because anywhere we went, someone would call out his name or stop to chat with him. Be it a teacher, a co-worker, a boss or a peer they all loved him. I have never, until now, heard anyone have anything but kind words to say about Ben. He was easy-going; never judgmental and always respectful. He never caused or was ever involved in any trouble.

School was always a real challenge for Ben. Early on he had some developmental delays, and he really struggled with focusing and retaining the information. One pediatrician, Dr Ahmed, gave him a diagnosis of ADD, which never really fit him, but he still had Ben try some medications but they did nothing but make him sleepy and lose weight, so we stopped them. He did require an Individual Education Plan (IEP) all through school to keep up with the work. Through what seemed a like a disadvantage, Ben always remained happy, kind, and easy-going, never thrown off by his own slower pace. His parent-teacher conferences were more often about what a nice kid he was, rather than his actual academics.

Outside of school Ben was always ambitious. He sought out and obtained his first job around age 15 all on his own and had consistently held a job since that time.

After graduating high school, he considered several trade type schools, but just could not find a fit for himself, so he just kept working.

Knowing Ben as we do, our family and the entire community for that matter were just in shock when we learned of the accusations against him. Honestly, we still struggle to wrap our minds around it. That said, we have watched Ben take full responsibility for his actions. He has never tried to shift any blame, only showing remorse and regret for going down a road he knows was a wrong one. He has expressed remorse for any harm his actions caused to his family and all others involved, whom he really cared about. While in county custody Ben started working with a spiritual counselor that has been nothing short of life changing for him. He has told us of ongoing correspondence type bible study he has done on his own to help him understand himself, his relationship with God and others. Ben has verbalized he hoped someday to be able to help someone the way his spiritual counselor helped him, and he did refer some of the inmates in county that were struggling to his counselor. To this day he continues to attend Sunday services and work on his learning. Ben also reached out to us asking for any materials we could send him to work on himself. We have read books together so we could discuss them later and he has some workbooks on learning how to become a better version of himself. The growth and maturity I have seen in Ben since his arrest has made both his father and I, strangely proud, if that is even understandable, as we are certainly aware of the gravity of the nature of his charges. We are not in any way minimizing or certainly not condoning any of his actions, but we will be here to continue to support him. Support him so he can learn while he serves his sentence to not let his mistakes define him and to put in the work to become the man we know he is.

I thank you for your time, and trust as you decide how he pays his debt to society you will take into consideration Ben's past character, prior to this mistake, and his accountability for his actions since that time. We pray he can move forward; use any time he has for good and amends and come out of this to be a productive member of society.



Wilber Wheeler

8 Linda ct.

Kirkwood, PA 17536

607-426-2318

Honorable Judge Brann,

I would first like to thank you for your time and introduce myself. My name is Wilber Wheeler, and I am writing to you on behalf of my son, Benjamin Richard Wheeler.

I would like to take the opportunity to describe the Ben that we knew prior to August 6, 2022. Ben was a fun, carefree child growing up. He was never into athletics but still tried a few sports. Ben's siblings were always at a ball field as they were more drawn to that environment than Ben was. Ben would just as soon walk through the crowds chatting and socializing because that is the kind of person he was. Ben knew everyone and everyone knew Ben.

Ben was an at best, average student, but really enjoyed the school atmosphere and never complained when it would get too hard for him. He found that music was his thing and joined the band in high school and took it very seriously. He finally found something that was his and that he felt comfortable with and that he was good at.

Ben was also a very hard-working kid at an age when most kids didn't even want to consider getting a job. He started working at 15 and worked all through high school. College or trade schools were not for him, so he continued to be a part of the work force until early August of 2022.

From that time on, to say that the people involved, our family, and the community we lived in were in shock, would be an understatement. I fully understand the charges against Ben, and his actions, are inexcusable. It would be careless of me to say I know what everyone else is going through, I can only assume. I can say with certainty that it has changed our family dynamic. Like so many others we are all trying to figure out how it came to this, how Ben sacrificed his freedom by making the mistakes he made and what drove him to do this? This was not the Ben our family or our community knew.

Forward to now, Ben has matured dramatically since his incarceration began. His Mom and I visit him regularly, video chat weekly and talk several times per week. Ben has taken complete responsibility for his actions and understands the situation he has put himself in. He often talks about the people he let down and comments that he gets so mad at himself daily for the damage he has done and mad at himself for even allowing this to happen, as I do believe he struggles with the why and how of all of this.

Ben has sought out resources to help him understand why and how. He knows that resources and people that can help him, are limited in the corrections system, so he has initiated many conversations with a spiritual advisor whom he still works with to this day. He has sent out for self-help workbooks, and continually reaches out to us to send him literature and workbooks in the hopes of being a better Ben Wheeler, the one we know he can be again. He was given a job in the

library at his current location which has given him some sense of self-worth again and has motivated him to stay busy and use his time wisely.

Ben has turned to the church for guidance and attends services each week. A group of inmates had tried to get a prayer group started recently, but did not find enough interest. He has commented that they are not giving up on that, and will try again, as it has become very important to several of them. We have sent Ben daily devotional books at his request that he can read each day of the year as a source of inspiration. I will be the first to tell you, that I am not a highly religious person, but I too have the same book as Ben so we can read it together and discuss passages that stand out to us. It brings us both a bit of peace if only for a moment or two.

Again, I want to thank you for your time and consideration in Ben's case. As a parent, we do not get to choose when we can and can't be there for our kids. It has never been and never will be an option to not be there and support Ben. We will all get through this as a family no matter what the outcome, with the hopes that with that support, Ben can lead a meaningful life again, when that time comes.

Sincerely,

Wilber Wheeler

March 24, 2025

Dennis Vermilya  
157 W Union St.  
Canton PA 17724

To: Chief Judge Matthew Brann

This letter is in regard to my support for Mr. Benjamin Wheeler, a young man from Bradford County, who I have had the privilege of serving for several years as a spiritual advisor. I've had the blessing of volunteering as a spiritual mentor and advisor to hundreds of men during the past 28 plus years. I have seen many positive and credible life-changing results with men at the county jail and also as they become state inmates. I have been to approximately 25 of Pennsylvania's state correctional facilities.

Benjamin Wheeler is a young man that I first started visiting on a one-to-one basis over three and a half to four years ago. Benjamin is a young man that has been eagerly receptive to following a Godly path as I have continued to share the love of Christ for him as demonstrated in God's word. To me, it has been that Benjamin has decided God indeed loves him and his à plan for his life. I believe with à determined mindset Benjamin continues diligently on this spiritual pathway to this day.

To this day, I continue to have contact with him at SCI Forest. I have provided books and encouraged Benjamin with new ways to seek his own spiritual improvement there. We continue to have constructive phone conversations on a regular basis. I know he has been completing programs, thus acquiring certificates. His own personal quest to do mail-in bible studies has been very commendable. I am confident that Benjamin Wheeler has sincere regret for past decisions that have caused anguish in every way, however, I also believe the direction that he has been heading toward these last few years is quite admirable. I believe this in regard to Benjamin-more so than many a man I've worked with in the past. He has an excellent support system in his parents Wilber and Donna Wheeler. I speak with his parents on a regular basis. The direction I've seen Mr. Wheeler pursue shows to me a man that is taking ownership of his life and

future. It has been my privilege to help serve this young man as a spiritual advisor, in what I believe has been a most tangible way.

Thank you to the court for allowing me to continue to serve this young man via this letter of recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Vermilya", is positioned above a horizontal blue line.

Dennis Vermilya (Mar 27, 2025 17:08 EDT)

Mr. Dennis Vermilya